

THE IBIS.

FIFTH SERIES.

No. VII. JULY 1884.

XXV.—*Additional Notes on the Ornithology of Transvaal.*

By THOMAS AYRES. Communicated by JOHN HENRY GURNEY.

[Continued from 'The Ibis,' 1880, p. 273.]

[In the following Notes such species as Mr. Ayres had not previously recorded from Transvaal are numbered consecutively with his former lists.—J. H. G.]

358. *CIRCAETUS CINEREUS*, Vieill. Cinereous Harrier-Eagle.

Female, shot in the Rustenburg district, July 20, 1882. Length in the flesh 28 inches, 5 feet across the wings. Bill horn-colour, nearly black; legs ashy; eye yellow.

Female, from the same locality, shot November 7, 1882. Length in the flesh 28·50 inches. Bill dusky, ashy about the base; tarsi and feet dingy white.

One of these specimens was gorged to the chin with two large snakes, each at least 4 feet long, and swallowed whole.

This species is found about the Klooft at Magaliesbergen. It is solitary in its habits, and settles on trees, generally on the tops of those of which the foliage is dense; when sitting it erects the frill at the back of the head, which gives it a

crested appearance. There can be no doubt that *C. cinereus* is quite distinct from *C. pectoralis*, and I should not think that any one seeing both species in the flesh could suppose them to be the same, though both are snake-eating Eagles.

[I have taken the following additional measurements from these two specimens, which may be compared with those recorded in 'The Ibis' for 1878, p. 163, and for 1880, p. 258:—

	Wing. in.	Tarsus. in.	Middle toe <i>s. u.</i> in.	Culmen <i>s. c.</i> in.
No. 1	22.40	3.75	2.50	2.10
„ 2	22.35	3.65	2.45	2.15

The upper surface in both birds is entirely of a dark brown, except that in No. 1 the feathers of the upper tail-coverts are crossed by an imperfect white bar near the base and are also tipped with white; the tail in both specimens exhibits three cross bars of brownish grey and a narrow white tip, the interspaces being blackish brown.

With the exception of two white cross bars and a white tip on the feathers of the under tail-coverts, the entire under surface in both birds is dark brown, with no white bases to the feathers, except to a very slight extent on the abdomen in No. 1.—J. H. G.]

CIRCUS MACRURUS (Gmel.). Swainson's Harrier.

These Harriers have a fine time of it when the farmers shoot the numerous Finches (*Euplectes taha*, *Chera progne*, &c.) which destroy so much of their corn; the Harriers are then particularly busy coursing over the fields and stubbles for wounded birds, from which they get many a good meal. Although their flight when hunting is usually rather leisurely and somewhat wavering, it is astonishing with what rapidity they apparently turn over and seize their victim, be it chicken or other bird; the swarms of Finches often dart into the thickest parts of the nearest leafy trees on the approach of their enemy and wait till the danger is past.

[In 'The Ibis' for 1871, p. 148, Mr. Ayres remarked that this species is only found in Transvaal during the southern summer, in illustration of which I may mention that of ten

Transvaal specimens which he has sent me, two were shot in November, one in December, four in January, one in February, and two in March.—J. H. G.]

ASTURINULA MONOGRAMMICA (Temm.). One-streaked Hawk.

Male, immature, shot near Rustenburg, 30th June, 1882. Eye brown; legs and cere red.

Male, adult, same locality, 21st July, 1882. Eye dark brick-red; legs and cere red. The stomach of this specimen contained the remains of a large lizard. In habits this species resembles the Bush-Hawks; it settles on high trees, but not on the top; it is quick on the wing, but is usually not so shy as most others of its family.

SCELOSPIZIAS POLYZONOIDES (Smith). Smith's Many-banded Hawk.

Female, adult, shot 29th June, 1881.

Male, immature in change to adult dress, shot 17th July, 1882.

This species is never plentiful, but more are to be seen in our winter than in our summer months, possibly in consequence of the foliage being then less dense. The stomach of one of the specimens sent contained mice.

359. NISAETUS BELLICOSUS (Daud.). Martial Hawk-Eagle.

A friend of mine, with whom I was out shooting on the hills a few miles from Potchefstroom, managed to kill a magnificent Eagle of this species which had been making a meal off a steinbuck.

[Mr. Ayres was not able to send me this specimen, but I have no doubt that he correctly identified it.

I have recently been informed by Count T. Salvadori that a collection made in Schoa by the late Marquis Antinori contains no less than seven examples of this fine species.—J. H. G.]

360. NISAETUS SPILOGASTER (Du Bus). Du Bus's Hawk-Eagle.

Female, adult, shot near Rustenburg, 29th June, 1882.

Length 26 inches, tail 12, wing 16·50. Eye yellow; toes greenish yellow; cere greenish; bill black. This Eagle swooped down from the mountain and seized a Rameron Pigeon which my brother had wounded; he fired at it and missed, but it only flew a few yards and settled on a dead tree, evidently not liking to give up its prey, and remaining there till he loaded again and shot it. Another of these Eagles caught a full-grown fowl and ate it within a foot of the back wall of my brother's house. This Eagle is exceedingly destructive to poultry; descending from the highest parts of the mountains, it skims quietly close to the ground, and, covered by any convenient clump of bushes or trees, it alights on the ground as near as it can, and running among the grass or other cover, seizes an unhappy fowl from amongst the frightened lot and proceeds to eat it on the spot. It is very quick on the wing, and, though very fearless when hungry, is generally very shy and difficult to approach. Its vision is wonderfully good; my brother one day shot at and slightly wounded a little *Elanus ceruleus*, when a pair of these Eagles swooped down with the greatest velocity from the top of the mountain, a good mile away, and immediately gave chase to the *Elanus*, which for a long time evaded its fate by dodging its powerful enemies, but was at last seized just as the three disappeared behind some trees.

The above observations are the result of my brother's experience of these Eagles; I have myself only seen them at a great distance, soaring quietly about the highest part of the Magaliesbergen.

361. AQUILA WAHLBERGI, Sund. Wahlberg's Eagle.

Male, shot near Rustenburg, 20th December, 1882. Iris hazel; bill black, but bluish towards the base; gape, cere, and feet pale yellow. Length 23·50 inches. Stomach contained a small lizard.

Wahlberg's Eagle is not unfrequently met with amongst the Magaliesbergen, either singly or in pairs. On one occasion my brother saw two of them attacking something on the ground, in turn darting down and rising again, until at

length both birds alighted, and on my brother going to the spot he found that they had killed and had already partially devoured a very large and poisonous snake called by the Boers the "Swart Ring-hals."

AQUILA VERREAUXI, Less. Verreaux's Eagle.

Male, very nearly adult, shot near Rustenburg, October 1882. Iris hazel; bill whitish ashy, but darker towards the tip; cere light yellow, this tint extending also on to the basal portion of the bill; bare skin about the eye light yellow; feet dirty yellow. Length 29 inches.

This is the only specimen of this lovely Eagle which has fallen to my gun; but amongst the Magaliesbergen it is not uncommon, and is always, according to my observation, in pairs. It is conspicuous from its jet-black plumage and white back. It nests on the ledges of precipices, generally choosing such as are inaccessible. The Boers say that it usually hunts in couples, carrying off their young goats, fowls, &c.; they also assert that when it finds a "klipspringer" (our chamois) on the edge of a precipice, it dashes at it with wonderful force, and knocking off its victim, follows it with such velocity as to reach it almost immediately after it has been killed by its fall on the rocks below; it is even said that the much larger "Reh buck" frequently shares the same fate, and I have no doubt of the truth of the statement.

When this Eagle is freshly killed its powerful build is very noticeable, as are also its wonderfully heavy and powerful legs and its enormous feet and claws.

The specimen now sent I shot amongst the mountains. Observing two of them, probably a pair, I sat down amongst some rocks on the edge of a precipice and waited till, as they were circling about, the cock bird came within range of an A A A, which brought him down to the bottom; I waited a little longer before descending to secure my prize, and by doing so I very nearly obtained the other also.

362. TINNUNCULUS PEKINENSIS, Swinh. Eastern Grey-winged Kestrel.

[Mr. Ayres has sent two adult male Kestrels, which appear

to me to be referable to the doubtfully distinct Oriental race of *T. cenchris*, for which the late Mr. Swinhoe proposed the subspecific appellation of *T. pekinensis*, and in which the grey on the wing-coverts reaches to the carpal joint with but very little admixture of rufous. The occurrence of these specimens in South-eastern Africa is probably analogous to that of *Erythropus amurensis*, indicating a migration from India to Africa; unless, indeed, some western specimens assimilate in coloration to those of the east; but I have seen none such from either Europe or Western Asia, and none from Africa, excepting the two now referred to. Of these, one was shot about thirty miles from Potchefstroom on 27th January, and a female, which may probably also belong to the eastern race, was shot on the same day and at the same place; but I may mention that the females of the two races are not distinguishable. Some normal males of *T. cenchris* were also killed in the same locality within a few days of the same date; and Mr. Ayres notes that they were there "in considerable numbers," possibly attracted by locusts, on which one of the birds shot was found to have been feeding.

The other male of *T. pekinensis* was obtained at Potchefstroom in the month of June, which, I believe, is an unusual time of year for the occurrence in South Africa of *T. pekinensis*.

The specimens sent by Mr. Ayres have been added to the collection in the Norwich Museum.—J. H. G.]

CAPRIMULGUS EUROPÆUS, Linn. European Goatsucker.

Male, Rustenburg, 11th February, 1880. Stomach contained large dung-beetles.

CYPSELUS CAFFER, Licht. African White-rumped Swift.

A pair of these Swifts took possession, as usual, of a Swallow's nest under the eaves of my house; and the last lot of young Swifts, two in number, were nearly ready to fly in the beginning of March, by which time most birds of this species had left this part of the country.

MEROPS NUBICOIDES, DesMurs. Carmine-throated Bee-eater.

Male and female. Iris umber-brown; bill black; tarsi and feet dingy ash-brown.

I found a fair sprinkling of these very handsome Bee-eaters on the Eland's river in the Rustenburg district in January 1883; the nearly full-grown young birds were with the old ones. This Bee-eater is much tamer and more easy to approach than most of the genus, but it is not often met with.

363. MEROPS APIASTER, Linn. European Bee-eater.

Three specimens sent, shot in December (2nd), January (26th), and February.

This species was very plentiful in the Rustenburg district during February and March 1882, and again during our summer in the following year.

CERYLE MAXIMA (Pall.). Great African Kingfisher.

Female, shot 4th February.

In this specimen the tail-feathers seem to have been shed all at once, and the partly-grown new feathers to be making their appearance in the same way. It is a scarce species throughout this country.

CUCULUS CANORUS, Linn. European Cuckoo.

[Mr. Ayres sends two males, both shot on the same farm, about thirty miles from Potchefstroom, one on the 21st January, 1879, the date when the other was procured being unfortunately not recorded; each of the birds had been feeding on caterpillars. Both birds show marks of immaturity, but have attained the adult dress, with the exception of some slight remains of the previous plumage on the jugulum and abdomen, and excepting also a few primaries belonging to the immature dress, and, in the case of the specimen of which the date is recorded, a few feathers of similar age in the wing-coverts.

I have at different times received from Mr. Ayres five South-African specimens of the European Cuckoo, including

the above, all of which have exhibited slight remains of immature plumage.

It occasionally happens that young Cuckoos commence the assumption of the adult dress before leaving England; I have recently seen two such (one killed on the 1st, the other on the 2nd of September) which had acquired some adult rectrices, and one of which also showed a considerable patch of adult plumage on the throat and upper breast.—J. H. G.]

CHRYSOCOCCYX CUPREUS (Bodd.). Didric Cuckoo.

I was informed that towards the end of our summer in 1880 these Cuckoos were to be found in hundreds along the Rhinoster river, near Cronstadt, where they were doubtless collecting to migrate. Transvaal seems to be one of their chief breeding-countries, the Sparrow (*Passer arcuatus*) being their most frequent foster-parent.

[Judging from the specimens sent to me by Mr. Ayres, the sexes in this species are alike when fully adult, except that in the female the upper breast is suffused with a very slight tinge of fulvous, and that, according to the memoranda attached to the skins by Mr. Ayres, the eyelid is "crimson" in the male and "dusky" in the female. Mr. Ayres has also sent several memoranda as to the colour of the bill, which in young birds is "orange-red" or "light red-brown," altering as the bird grows older till, when it is adult, the bill is black, with an "ashy pale" base to the lower mandible; on the other hand the iris, which is noted as "red" in the adult male and "dull red" in the adult female, in younger birds is either "light grey," "tawny ash-colour," or "light tawny brown."

I have received from Mr. Ayres specimens of this Cuckoo killed in Transvaal in the months of October, December, January, February, and March.—J. H. G.]

364. *COCCYSTES CAFFER* (Licht.). Levaillant's Cuckoo.

Three females, shot in the Rustenburg district, 3rd November, 1882, 17th January and 4th February, 1883. Iris dark brown or dusky umber; bill black; tarsi and feet ash-colour. Caterpillars in stomach of one specimen.

This very fine Cuckoo was tolerably plentiful during our spring months (October and November) in 1882 all about the wooded parts of the Magaliesbergen, becoming scarcer as the summer came on. It is shy and difficult to approach, but its loud harsh cries often attract attention; it is not unfrequently mobbed by small birds.

CENTROPUS SENEGALENSIS (Linn.). Burchell's Spur-heel Cuckoo.

Male, Potchefstroom, June 1882. Iris blood-red; bill light ashy, but black on the ridge and at the tip; tarsi and feet bluish ashy. Stomach contained a mixed cargo of grasshoppers, large bugs (very strong-smelling), a large lizard's tail, and a good sprinkling of crab-shells.

Female, Rustenburg, December 18, 1882. Iris red; tarsi and feet ash-colour.

This species appears to be gradually on the increase in the Potchefstroom district; as each successive summer comes round, I hear more and more its monotonous and melancholy note, not unfrequently even in the thick hedgerows of the town itself; but being exceedingly shy and retiring in its habits, it is not often seen. In the wooded country of the Rustenburg district it is far more common, especially along the streams; it builds a clumsy nest of coarse grass in the low bush and lays white eggs.

[As this is a very variable species, it may be worth while to add a few particulars of the two specimens above referred to; the following are the principal measurements:—

	Total length.	Wing.	Tarsus.	Middletoe <i>s. u.</i>
	in.	in.	in.	in.
Male (in the flesh)	15.50	6.25	1.60	1.15
Female (in the skin) . .	16.25	7.10	1.80	1.30

The plumage of the male agrees with the description given in Sharpe's Layard, p. 163, except that the under wing-coverts are a rich rufous brown instead of being "pale buff;" the secondaries are also crossed by numerous bars of brownish black, which may probably be the remains of immature plumage. The female differs from the male in the absence of

these bars, and also in the bill being entirely black, and the head and nape, especially the latter, much more richly glossed with dark bluish green.—J. H. G.]

BARBATULA EXTONI, Layard. Exton's Barbet.

My friend Mr. Lucas found a nest of this little Barbet with young ones in December; the birds had bored a hole in the rotten bough of a tree in the woods of the Magaliesbergen, where this species is plentiful.

CISTICOLA ABERRANS (Smith). Aberrant Fantail.

I feel pretty sure that Mr. Gurney was right in stating, in 'The Ibis' for 1880, p. 101, that *C. smithii* and *C. aberrans* are distinct species, the latter being much the scarcer bird here, and found in the scrub of the open plains, where the former is seldom met with. *C. smithii* is about the commonest Warbler of the warmer and wooded parts of Transvaal, which commence on the northern slopes of the range of mountains called "Wit-waters-raand." This range forms the watershed which divides the streams that run northward into the Limpopo from those that, flowing southward, empty themselves into the Vaal river, this watershed being the boundary between the open, cold, and healthy country to the south, and the wooded, hot, and more fever-stricken district to the north.

CINNYRIS MARIQUENSIS, Smith. Southern Bifasciated Sun-bird.

This Sun-bird is by no means uncommon along the banks of the Eland's river, a little to the north of Rustenburg.

[In 'The Ibis,' for 1871, p. 150, the previous note of Mr. Ayres on this species is given under the head of "*Cinnyris bifasciata*."—J. H. G.]

CINNYRIS AMETHYSTINUS (Shaw). Amethyst Sun-bird.

This species is common amongst the Magaliesbergen, especially during our winter months, June, July, and August, when it is in its brightest plumage.

CINNYRIS TALATALA, Smith. Andersson's Sun-bird.

This tiny and beautiful Honey-sucker is a common Maga-

liesbergen species both in winter and summer; it breeds, as also do the two preceding species, amongst the bushes in suitable localities.

365. TERPSIPHONE PERSPICILLATA (Swains.). Tchitree Flycatcher.

This species is sparsely scattered throughout the Magaliesbergen, frequenting well-wooded ravines and valleys; it disappears during our winter months, returning somewhat late in the spring; it is restless in its habits, shy, and difficult to shoot. The cock birds frequently utter a short but somewhat sweet little song. There is much individual variation in the length of the tail.

MUSCICAPA GRISOLA, Linn. Spotted Flycatcher.

This species is a regular visitor during our summer, and, I think, is then universal in Transvaal wherever there is bush, but never plentiful, and always either solitary or in pairs.

HIRUNDO SEMIRUFa, Sund. Rufous-breasted Swallow.

This very fine Swallow is much more plentiful in the warmer Rustenburg district than in the open and colder country round Potchefstroom. Last year a pair built in an old brick-kiln on the outskirts of the village of Rustenburg; the nest much resembled that of *H. cucullata*.

HIRUNDO DIMIDIATA, Sund. Pearly-breasted Swallow.

One gusty evening in March 1882 a good many of these little Swallows flew wildly past in the gloaming, apparently in a great hurry.

[These were perhaps arriving in Transvaal for the southern winter (see Mr. Ayres's note in 'The Ibis,' 1879, p. 291). The specimens which I have received from Transvaal were obtained in May, July, August, and October, which scarcely accords with the experience of the late Mr. Andersson, who, in his Damara-Land notes, p. 52, speaks of having seen them on the Okavango river "as early as the 1st of September," of their arrival in Damara Land "about November," and of their nesting in that country in December. This dif-

ference of habit as observed in South-eastern and South-western Africa at about the same latitude is, I think, remarkable.—J. H. G.]

366. *HIRUNDO PUELLA*, Temm. Lesser Striped-breasted Swallow.

Female, Rustenburg, 11th October. Iris greyish brown.

This species is a miniature of *H. cucullata*, inhabiting the warm bush-veldt country, apparently from the Rustenburg district northwards. I found it breeding sparsely in small caves (a nest in each cave) in the banks of a stream near the village; the eggs are white; the nest much resembles that of *H. cucullata*, but is smaller.

[I have specimens of this Swallow collected by the late Mr. E. C. Buxton near the Lobombo mountains, on the eastern frontier of Transvaal.—J. H. G.]

367. *PHOLIDAUGES VERREAUXI*, Bocage. Verreaux's Glossy Thrush.

This species is very plentiful during the summer months in the Rustenburg district, where it breeds freely in all suitable localities; its nest, like that of the other Grackles, is placed in the hole of a tree, and is lined with fresh green soft leaves.

HYPHANTORNIS VELATUS (Vieill.). Black-veiled Weaver-bird.

The birds of this species that frequent the mountainous parts of the Rustenburg district, where the country is wooded and warm, appear to me to be very much smaller, and also much brighter in plumage, as a rule, than those inhabiting the more open plains of the same district and other open parts of the Transvaal. Adapting their manners to circumstances, they hang their nests to low bushes and trees overhanging the streams, whereas in the open country their nests are usually placed between two reeds in the swamps or on the reedy banks of rivers, though even there the nests are occasionally to be found hanging from the outer twigs of trees. The eggs of the smaller race vary in colour just as those of the larger and less gaudy birds.

[The smaller race alluded to by Mr. Ayres appears to be that to which Vieillot gave the specific name of "*velatus*;" his description ('Encyclopédie Méthodique,' p. 701) agrees better with it than with the larger race, and he also speaks of its occurrence in Namaqua Land, which accords with the late Mr. Andersson's remark that it "is common in Damara Land and the parts adjacent" (*vide* 'Birds of Damara Land,' p. 169). The larger race, if admitted as subspecifically distinct, will bear Sir A. Smith's name of "*mariquensis*."

I recorded the two races, under the names above mentioned, in 'The Ibis' for 1871, p. 254; but in the volume for 1880, p. 106, I applied, erroneously as I now believe, that of "*vitellinus*," instead of "*velatus*," to a Transvaal example of the smaller race.

I have taken the following measurements, which may be worth recording:—

H. mariquensis from Potchefstroom.

	Wing. in.	Tarsus. in.	Culmen. in.
Four males	3.20-3.50	0.90-1.05	0.65-0.72
Three females ..	3.00-3.10	0.80	0.62-0.65

H. velatus from Rustenburg.

Five males	2.90-3.20	0.70-0.85	0.55-0.65
One female	2.80	0.75	0.60

H. velatus from Damara Land.

One female	2.80	0.70	0.50
-----------------	------	------	------

Measurements taken by Mr. Andersson from three other specimens of *H. velatus* will be found at p. 170 of his notes on the birds of Damara Land.—J. H. G.]

PYROMELANA TAHA (Smith). Taha Bishop-bird.

Notwithstanding the multitudes of this species and of *P. oryx* that were killed here during the very severe snow-storm in our winter of 1881, their numbers now (April 1882) seem to be but little diminished; neither is *Estrelda subflava* less numerous than usual, but *Estrelda astrild* and *Vidua erythrorhyncha* are very noticeably thinned. The snow re-

mained on the ground for a week or more, covering the grass-seeds on which many small kinds of birds feed ; and this, with the unusual cold, killed a marvellous number of them, and also many large birds, besides a great number of antelopes and other animals.

In the winter season flocks of this species, and also of *P. oryx* and of *Quelea sanguinirostris*, come for miles up the river from their favourite patches of reeds in the swamps where they roost, to feed on the minute grass-seeds in the old cultivated ground about Potchefstroom, returning in large flights to the same swamps in the evening. Although the different species feed together, often also in company with flocks of *Passer arcuatus*, so closely that they may be killed by the same shot, yet, in going to their feeding-grounds and in returning to their roosting-places, the birds of each species keep by themselves in separate flocks, notwithstanding their habit of mingling whilst feeding.

PASSER DIFFUSUS, Smith. Southern Grey-headed Sparrow.

These Sparrows are found sparsely in the town of Potchefstroom, and appear to breed in the same localities and to make much the same kind of untidy nest as *P. arcuatus* and our English Sparrow. Last season a pair of them took possession of an old Swallow's nest, but were driven away by *P. arcuatus*.

PETRONIA PETRONELLA (Licht.). South-African Rock-Sparrow.

This species affects the wooded and warm country where rocks abound.

FRINGILLARIA CAPENSIS (Linn.). Cape Bunting.

This is by no means a plentiful bird in Transvaal, as far as I am acquainted with it.

[This species was recorded in Mr. Ayres's previous lists of Transvaal birds under its synonym of *F. vittata* ; and in 'The Ibis' for 1878, p. 297, the English name of "Rock-Bunting" was assigned to it, which, in Mr. Sharpe's edition of Mr. Layard's work, is applied to *F. tahapisi*.—J. H. G.]

SPIZOCORYS CONIROSTRIS (Sund.). Pink-billed Lark.

During the month of August 1881 these Larks were much more plentiful than usual; on the open flats near Potchefstroom one put them up at almost every step.

368. MIRAFRA NIGRICANS (Sund.). Wahlberg's Lark.

Male, shot 10th January, 1882. Iris hazel; bill dusky, but pale at the base of the under mandible; tarsi and feet yellowish white. Total length 8 inches, wing $4\frac{3}{4}$, tail 3, tarsus $1\frac{3}{8}$. Stomach contained locusts.

This, to me, exceedingly scarce bird was shot amongst the hills to the north of Rustenburg, within six miles of the Crocodile river; it was a solitary bird, running on some flat rocks with much sheltering scrub about, and very Pipit-like in its appearance and manners.

[The specimen sent, which has been added to the collection of the British Museum, is probably a younger male than that described and figured by Du Bocage in his 'Ornithologie d'Angola,' p. 376, pl. 8. fig. 1. When killed it was moulting, but the moult was nearly completed, though the primaries and some of the rectrices had not been renewed; all the new feathers of the upper surface are blackish brown, but are edged with rufescent fulvous, except the secondaries, which are tipped with white; the older feathers are paler than the new and are evidently faded; the under surface agrees with the description and figure above referred to, except that all the white portions of the plumage are tinged with fulvous.—J. H. G.]

ANTHUS BRACHYURUS, Sund. Short-tailed Pipit.

The specimens sent were shot in the Rustenburg district. These Pipits seem to be very locally distributed on the sloping sides of mountains and the neighbouring valleys, where bush and trees are pretty thickly scattered; they are frequently to be found close to some scrubby bush, and on being approached they often quietly move round out of sight, or squat close, and then rise almost under one's feet if the cover is at all good. Though generally alighting on the ground, they occasionally settle on a bush or tree; they have a quicker

and more eccentric flight than most of the Pipits and alight very suddenly.

BUDYTES FLAVA (Linn.). Blue-headed Wagtail.

April 17, 1882. These Wagtails have lately left us, disappearing gradually after having been unusually plentiful this season; they are particularly fond of accompanying sheep, picking up the insects disturbed by their feeding, and often alighting on their backs, where they seem to be quite at home, the sheep, apparently, not taking the slightest notice of them.

LANIARIUS ATROCOCCINEUS, Burch. Crimson-breasted Bush-Shrike.

Although this Shrike, according to my experience, is exceedingly shy and difficult to shoot, still one may often get very close to it amongst the dense thorny thickets which it loves. The loud note, a short *chuck-chuck*, which it frequently utters, may sometimes be heard half a mile away; and the bird, very usually, on an enemy's approach, quietly glides out low on the opposite side of some thorny bit of jungle and away to the next patch; this is repeated till a regular round is taken, and the bird and the hunter start again from the first bit of bush and repeat the round without even a snap-shot being obtained.

FRANCOLINUS SUBTORQUATUS, Smith. Coqui Francolin.

Chick, half-grown, shot 8th December. This was one of a brood which got up almost like a bevy of Quails, for which I mistook them when I fired, as they were nearly as strong on the wing.

CURSORIUS CHALCOPHERUS, Temm. Bronze-winged Courser.

This is a very scarce Plover with us, but I found six or eight, some of them birds of the year, amongst thorn-scrub on Mr. Dunn's farm near Potchefstroom; they are quick on the wing, and are over the trees and out of shot in a twinkling.

GLAREOLA NORDMANNI, Finsch. Nordmann's Pratincole.

Notwithstanding the almost total disappearance of locusts

from the country for some years, this Plover is as plentiful as ever, and makes itself happy on a beetle diet.

TOTANUS CANESCENS (Gmel.). Greenshank.

Female, shot near Potchefstroom, 28th October.

In 1883 the Greenshank was unusually numerous.

ARDEA BUBULCUS, Audouin. Western Buff-backed Heron.

This species is most plentiful with us in January and February, after which the majority of these birds seem to leave us ; during the above-named months they are found in small flocks ; they roost amongst the reedy swamps, and always at the same spots.

ARDETTA PODICEPS (Bon.). Rufous-necked Little Bittern.

Male, in nearly full dress, shot July 1882. Iris yellow ; bill yellowish green with the ridge dusky brown ; tarsi and feet dull green with the hinder parts and soles of feet orange-yellow. Stomach contained a perch of at least 2 oz. in weight.

[Other specimens sent by Mr. Ayres were obtained in the months of January, March, April, and September.—J. H. G.]

NYCTICORAX GRISEUS (Linn.). European Night-Heron.

This species appears to be gradually getting scarcer about Potchefstroom.

PHALACROCORAX AFRICANUS (Gmel.). African Long-tailed Cormorant.

One fine day I saw one of these Cormorants catching small fish in water not more than six to twelve inches deep ; and it was amusing to watch how it skimmed along the bottom, only raising its head every now and again above the water to swallow a fish. These birds will keep well under water whilst chasing the small fish right up to the edge of a pool amongst the sedges with wonderful speed and dexterity.